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A FRESH LOOK AT SUPERVISION.

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TO PROVIDE THE CHALLENGE FOR IMPROVING TEACHING BEHAVIOR WITHOUT THE THREAT THAT COMMONLY ACCOMPANIES A TEACHER-SUPERVISOR EVALUATION PROCEDURE, 22 TEACHERS IN A 2-YEAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INSERVICE PROGRAM HELD GROUP SESSIONS, GUIDED BY A SUPERVISOR, IN WHICH TEACHING BEHAVIOR WAS DISCUSSED. THE TECHNIQUES USED INCLUDED FLANDERS' INTERACTION ANALYSIS, ROLE PLAYING, TAPE RECORDING, HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT, AND EXPERIMENTATION WITH TEACHING BEHAVIORS. SUBSEQUENTLY, MORE THAN HALF THE TEACHERS DECIDED TO ANALYZE THEIR TEACHING THROUGH INTERACTION ANALYSIS AND TO EXAMINE INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS THROUGH GROUP ANALYSES OF TAPE RECORDINGS OF THEIR OWN TEACHING. IT WAS FELT THAT FEEDBACK DURING THESE GROUP DISCUSSIONS SHOULD DESCRIBE RATHER THAN EVALUATE COVER AREAS PERCEIVED SUSCEPTIBLE TO CHANGE BY THE RECIPIENT, FOLLOW UPON REQUEST OF THE RECIPIENT, COVER CURRENT MATERIAL, CONCERN SPECIFIC TEACHING ACTS, AND NOT REQUIRE A TEACHER TO DEFEND HIS TEACHING. GROUP SUPERVISION APPEARED TO HAVE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON FACULTY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNICATIONS, GOAL-SETTING, AND BEHAVIORAL NORMS. INTERACTION ANALYSIS ALSO APPEARED TO INCREASE THE TEACHERS' SENSITIVITY TO THEIR VERBAL BHEHAVIOR AND ITS EFFECTS ON CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND INDIVIDUAL PUPILS. (LC)

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"A Fresh Look at Supervision"

by

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The principal-teacher conference which usually follows observation of an instructional period is often conducted with the same air of confidence as is the interview between doctor and patient or lawyer and client. If this setting is established because it is felt that only the observed teacher may profit, it might be assumed that the interview is concerned more with the teacher than with the act of teaching.

This confidential approach to supervision of teachers in service has been widely promulgated and accepted. Thus, supervision, as presently practiced, may be seen to be surrounded by a "negative halo" effect, in that such confidentiality is generally seen to imply criticism. While proposing another approach, the authors do not obviate the value and necessity of this one.

If supervision, defined as the improvement of instruction, can be carried out so that teachers perceive it as "challenge without threat," perhaps another approach is at least equally appropriate an approach which directs attention to the act of teaching rather than to the teacher.

In directing attention to the act of teaching, one might hypothesize that group supervision can be as effective as group counseling appears to be. One can also hypothesize that such a process is more economical in supervisory time expended and that the dynamics of small groups enhance both the effect of the process and faculty interpersonal relationships in the dimensions of peers and so-called status personnel.

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Some of the effects of small group process which almost invariably occur are: (1) communication is opened, (2) cohesiveness is encouraged, (3) group norms are clarified for general understanding, (4) group goals are clarified.

In attempting to explore the potential of group supervision, the authors felt it necessary to define the act of teaching. Combs and Snygg (3, pp. 389-390) hold that the genius of good teaching lies in the ability to challenge students without threatening them and that the distinction between challenge and threat lies "not in what the teacher thinks he is doing, but in what the students perceive him to be doing." Thus, the task is to study the act of teaching in terms of this ability, as communicated to students. The communication between teachers and students is sometimes non-verbal; however, it is largely composed of verbal behavior, and by objectively observing this talk, one can analyze the teacher's ability to challenge without threat. The authors' concern is to increase teachers' sensitivity to their own verbal behavior and their understanding of how this behavior affects classroom climate and individual pupils. The Flanders System of verbal interaction analysis provides the teacher with an instrument of objectivity through which he can compare his own performance with his intentions, through which teacher-pupil dialogue can be studied. (1) This system was used as the basis for an in-service training program carried out by the authors.

The Flanders System

Flanders classifies classroom verbal interaction in ten categories, seven of which identify teacher talk: Category 1, accepting and clarifying student feeling; 2, praising or encouraging student behavior;

3, accepting and clarifying student ideas; and 4, asking questions, are considered indirect teacher talk. Categories 5, lecturing, giving information or opinion; 6, giving directions; and 7, criticizing or justifying teacher authority, are considered direct teacher talk. Student talk is classified as catagories 8, response to the teacher, and 9, student initiated talk. Category 10 is used to identify silence or confusion.

The classroom observer or tape listener records in sequence every three seconds the appropriate category numbers. When the lesson is over, the observer enters the numbers in the form of tallies in a 10-row by 10-column grid called a matrix. The matrix reveals both a quantification of verbal interaction and patterns of verbal interaction.

Data which are related to quantification include the percentage of time consumed (1) by teacher talk, (2) by student talk, and (3) in silence or confusion. Percentages dealing with the amount of time spent in each of the seven categories of teacher talk may be computed.

The matrix, while summarizing the data found by the observer, also maintains some of the sequence. The teacher can see patterns regarding his reactions to student response, to silence or to student initiation. He may find answers to such questions as, "Which of my verbal behaviors seem to elicit student response?" and "At what point in the interaction do I find it necessary to criticize?"

The Flanders System of interaction analysis does yield descriptive information about the teacher-pupil dialogue, but this information is <u>in no way</u> an evaluation of teaching. If any kind of value judgment about teaching is to be made, it is done by the teacher himself, upon studying his own interaction patterns.

This system was developed and refined by Flanders in the early 1950's. The first research related children's attitudes to patterns of teacher behavior. Results of the research indicated that pupils of teachers who were observed to be indirect had more positive attitudes toward the school, the teachers and toward other pupils than did pupils of those teachers who were identified by observers as direct. This research supports the validity of interaction analysis as a tool for predicting general attitudes of children in a school classroom.

Several studies have been designed to relate pupil attitudes and pupil achievement to teacher behavior. These studies (Flanders, 1960; Amidon and Flanders, 1961; Amidon and Giammatteo, 1964) using interaction analysis present supporting evidence for the following conclusions: above average achievement and positive student behavior appear to be related to certain kinds of teacher behavior such as acceptance and clarification of student ideas, use of direction and criticism, amount of time spent in talking, and the encouragement of student initiated talk.

This research appears to have implications for teacher education. Studies in which interaction analysis was taught as an observational tool to teachers or student teachers were conducted (Flanders, 1962; Hough and Amidon, 1964; Kirk, 1964; and Zahn, 1964). Findings of these four studies indicate that interaction analysis does affect observable changes in teacher patterns of verbal behavior. After training, teachers were observed as: (1) more encouraging and accepting, (2) less critical, (3) more indirect, (4) more positive in their attitudes toward teaching, (5) more successful (by superiors' rating) in student teaching, (6) talking less, (7) giving fewer directions, and (8) permitting more

student initiated talk. These are changes in the perception of teaching and attitudes toward teaching, as well as in actual teaching behavior. The researchers cited believe that the major ingredient in such change was training in interaction analysis.

The In-Service Program

Unique in its simplicity, this system, nonetheless, does require study. To be able to interpret, or to understand the interpretation of a matrix, teachers need about ten to twelve hours of training. A two year in-service program was initiated in an elementary school in order that staff might learn to use this tool as an aid in studying their own teaching. The school staff consisted of twenty-two teachers, the principal, and seven part-time specialists. Approximately twenty persons participated in the training program, which consumed five two-hour meetings, spaced at weekly intervals. The primary objective of the first year of the program was to enable teaching staff members to interpret matrices of their own lessons. Training included tape listening for practice in categorization, construction of matrices, and some interpretative discussion of the matrix.

At the conclusion of the first year of the program, over half of the teachers decided to analyze their teaching through the analysis of verbal interaction. These teachers, in the traditional teacher-principal conference, were presented, without value judgment, matrices of their own teaching. Some of the teachers studied further and began to state objectives for particular lessons in terms of teaching patterns which they wished to develop.

At the end of the first year the group discussion culminated with

suggestions that (1) students be given more time to frame answers to questions, and (2) teachers might give more attention to the phrasing of a question. This discussion clearly centered about the teacher-pupil dialogue and its application to supervision in a group setting. The teachers in the group were also concerned with problems which they perceived as common to most group members. In this case, the teachers felt that recommendations ought to be given to the group as a whole rather than to any one individual. A distinction between "supervision in a group setting" and "group supervision" is made in this paper. The former is group emphasis on a problem seen as common to the group. The latter provides that "individuals explore and analyze their own problems" within a group.

Focus on individual problems came during a second year with the crystallization of the concept of group supervision and with a group analysis of tape recordings of their own teaching.

The ground rules which were accepted by the group established that feedback would be offered only in areas that were perceived as susceptible to change by the recipient, if he so desired, and tha feedback would be in the form of observation rather than interpretation. At any time, any member of the group could request that the tape be stopped in order to raise questions or to offer feedback.

As each of the taped lessons was concluded, the interaction analysis data for the lesson was presented to the group for discussion. Coupling information about a teacher's interaction pattern with group feedback and his own objectives, the teacher was asked to analyze his teaching.

Some of the major concerns of the group described in this paper were for: (1) communication among pupils, as well as interaction between individual pupil and teacher, (2) the cueing behavior of teachers, as it

affects pupil participation, (3) reflection of pupil ideas, as a powerful factor in influencing pupil participation, and (4) teachers projection of their own reaction and feelings on to children.

Some of the more important hypotheses developed by the teachers were those regarding the possible effect of interrupting a child, of anticipating student feelings, of questioning techniques, and of searching for a right answer in group discussions. They further designed in-class skill sessions for testing these hypotheses and experimented with behaviors which seemed to offer productivity.

Procedures - Ground Rules

As a result of the experience which the authors have had over a two-year period, several ideas have been developed which may be useful for those interested in doing this type of work with teachers.

The most important factor affecting climate of the group is the way in which members give feedback to one another about a tape recording which the group is auditing. A first step in setting up a successful group climate would seem to be the development of ground rules for giving feedback. The following rules were set up and used by the faculty group described in this article:

1. The person giving feedback describes the pattern of teaching, rather than evaluating. He attempts to give as objective a description as possible of what he heard happening, and he avoids saying that it was good or bad.

2. Feedback is offered only in areas that are perceived as susceptible to change by the recipient. For example, there is really not much use in discussing a teacher's stuttering, since he may have no power to change this, except through intensive therapy.

3. Feedback is given only upon request of the person whose teaching is being discussed. If a teacher is playing his tape and is interested in a reaction, observation or perception of others, he will ask for feedback.

4. Feedback is concerned with those aspects of teacher behavior that are characteristic of the teacher at the time that discussion is taking place, rather than with aspects of behavior that are characteristic of an earlier time. This is to say, material open to discussion should be current, not that of a previous year.

5. Feedback does not require a teacher to defend his personal opinion or feelings about the way in which he is teaching. Feedback should help to clarify, in the light of how others see a particular segment of teaching, rather than try to seek reasons for the holding of a particular philosophy or a particular attitude toward the teaching act.

6. Feedback is concerned with specific teaching acts, not with generalized interpretations. It can be concerned legitimately with the manner of questioning used, manner of responding to students, pace, or some other pattern of communication. These ground rules were honored in the breach, generally, and were involved only when feedback was perceived as being threatening to the recipient.

The writers also were concerned about what seemed to be the most appropriate composition and size of the group. The group has to be large enough to include all of the skills necessary for its successful functioning, and yet small enough to give each teacher an opportunity to become involved and to discuss his own teaching. A reasonable size may be somewhere between five and twelve members. The size also seems to depend on the amount of time the faculty has available for the particular activity.

Usually a staff using this process will want to adjust the size of the group to the amount of time available. Therefore, if a group has three hours a week, it might be appropriate to have from ten to fourteen in the group. On the other hand, if the group has only one hour a week, a smaller size would seem to be indicated.

Techniques

The first and most important activity is that of using interaction analysis to analyze one's own tape recording. Learning appears to be maximized if a teacher knows interaction analysis. Once he has learned it, he should be given the opportunity of classifying his own tape recording and also those of other teachers.

Role playing is perhaps one of the most widely used tools for improving teacher behavior. There are a number of ways of using role playing in combination with tape listening and interaction analysis. One type of role playing experience which the writers found useful was that of asking a teacher to produce only certain kinds of behavior in a teaching situation. He might try to ask only very broad questions or only very narrow questions. He might try to produce only praise statements in response to a student, only statements accepting ideas in response to a student, only critical statements or only direction-giving. The value of doing this is that it gives the teacher an opportunity to practice behaviors with which he may not be familiar, thus helping him to become more flexible in his behavior repertoire. A secondary purpose is that it gives a teacher a chance to note the impact a particular kind of behavior is having on students. If a teacher becomes more critical than is his custom, he can see the impact of criticism on his students. Role-playing can be conducted in the group while a tape recording is playing; the tape

can be stopped at a given point, and the principal can inquire, "How else could the teacher have asked that question?" and then teachers can have an opportunity to role-play different kinds of questions. Or, the tape recording can be stopped as the teacher responds to a student and the principal can ask, "How else could the teacher have responded to the student?" Again teachers will have an opportunity to role-play various kinds of reactions. Role playing can also be done in the classroom after a teacher has been able to decide some of the things he would like to try. He can plan some teaching patterns he would like to try, go into his classroom and role-play them, and tape the lesson so as to provide himself with feedback. When he listens to his tape, he will have some indication of the extent to which he has been successful in achieving the pattern he intended.

Tape recording, in general, is perhaps the most under-used teacher training technique. It is under-used in the sense that teachers seldom listen to their own performances, yet the machine is simple to operate, it is usually available, and it provides immediate and live feedback for the teacher. Simple tape listening, with the group, has a major focus for the use of interaction analysis in this group supervision. Procedure has been to play tapes of various teachers, with the option available to all group members of stopping the tape at any time to discuss a point. Sometimes a more careful analysis of a given portion of the tape will be the outcome. Other uses of tape listening are to play tapes other than those of the participants as examples of various teaching styles, so that the group may observe differing effects which occur when the same lesson is taught in different ways. Obviously, it will be easily observed that there are many ways in which to teach the same lesson, and that there is no one "right" way.

For changing behavior, one of the essential requirements is the process of developing hypotheses. In the group, teachers have started out by listening to a tape and discussing it, analyzing a matrix, and have proceeded to the development of questions about certain aspects of the interaction pattern. These are concerned with the change that a teacher might decide to make in his interaction pattern.

One of the most exciting activities which teachers can engage in is simply experimenting with teaching behavior. Although similar in one way to the developing of hypotheses, this activity often leads to creative teaching, thus broadening the teacher's behavioral repertoire and helping the teacher develop a truly experimental attitude.

Summary

It would appear that group supervision does provide some advantages that may be precluded in the traditional principal-teacher conference, particularly when confidentiality is not a requisite.

The authors believe that eachers did become sensitized to verbal interaction much as described in the cited research, and that the effect of group activity appeared to influence positively faculty interpersonal relationships, communications, goal-setting, and behavioral norms.

While group supervision may need to undergo the scrutiny of empirical research to provide data about the hypotheses advanced, the proccess appears to merit consideration.

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